

I know my Senate colleagues join me in celebrating the continued vitality of the Armenian culture, and in honoring and remembering the victims of the Armenian genocide.

REGIME TARGETS INDEPENDENT MEDIA IN BELARUS

Mr. CAMPBELL. Madam President, recently I introduced S. 700, the Belarus Democracy Act, a bipartisan initiative aimed at supporting democratic forces in the Republic of Belarus. As co-chairman of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, I want to report to my colleagues on the pressures faced by independent media in that country. The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) has just released their annual report documenting the dangers journalists face around the world, including Belarus.

In May of 2002, CPJ named Belarus one of the 10 worst places in the world to be a journalist due to the worsening repression under Europe's most authoritarian regime. Throughout the year the situation of the country's independent media deteriorated as Belarusian leader Aleksander Lukashenko mounted a comprehensive assault on all independent and opposition press.

While criminal libel laws had been on the books since 1999, they were not used by the Government until 2002. The law stipulates that public insults or libel against the President may be punished by up to 4 years in prison, 2 years in a labor camp, or by large fine. Articles in the criminal code which prohibit slaughtering and insulting the President or government officials are also used to stifle press freedom. The criminal code provides for a maximum penalty of 5 years' imprisonment for such offenses.

Journalists critical of the fall 2001 presidential elections were targeted. Mikola Markevich and Pavel Mazheyka of Pahonya and Viktor Ivashkevich of Rabochy were sentenced to corrective labor for "libeling" the President in pre-election articles. On March 4, a district court in Belarus commuted Milola Markevich's sentence from time in a corrective labor facility to "corrective labor at home." On March 21, a district court released Pavel Mazheyka on parole. Under Belarus law, prisoners may be released on parole after serving half term their.

Other charges were leveled later in the year against a woman who distributed anti-Lukashenko flyers, an opposition politician for libeling the President in a published statement, and a Belarusskaya Delovaya Gazeta reporter for criticizing the Prosecutor General of Belarus. A former lawyer for the mother of disappeared cameraman Dmitry Zavatsky received a 1½ year prison sentence suspended for 2 years for libeling the Prosecutor General.

Last August the independent newspaper Nasha Svaboda was fined 100 mil-

lion Belarusian rubles for civil libel of the chairman of the State Control Committee. The paper closed when it could not pay the fine. There are other forms of pressure and harassment as well.

The CPJ report notes the financial discrimination faced by nonstate media, including pressure from government officials on potential advertisers not to buy space in publications that criticize Lukashenko and his regime. Government officials also regularly encourage companies to pull advertising and threaten them with audits should they fail to do so, according to CPJ.

When the Belarussian Government increased newspaper delivery rates, only nongovernmental papers had to pay. When the Minsk City Council of Deputies levied 5 percent tax on newspapers, government papers were again exempt. Such tactics caused such independents as the Belaruskaya Maladzyozhnaya, Rabochy, Den and Tydnovik Mahilyouski to go under.

According to the State Department's recently released County Reports on Human Rights Practices "the regime continued to use its near-monopolies on newsprint production, newspaper printing and distribution, and national television and radio broadcasts to restrict dissemination of opposition viewpoints."

Mr. President, I urge my colleagues to support S. 700, the Belarus Democracy Act, in support of those brave individuals in Belarus, including representatives of independent media, who speak out in defense of human rights and democracy in a nation which enjoys neither.

THE SECURITY OF AMERICAN AGRICULTURE

Mr. AKAKA. Madam President, I rise today to discuss the threat of bioterrorist attacks on American agriculture.

Agroterrorism is a real and continuing concern. When Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge last month raised the threat advisory level to high, he launched Operation Liberty Shield to increase security and readiness in the United States. One part of Operation Liberty Shield involved taking additional steps to guarantee our food security. The government started to inspect imported food more carefully. The U.S. Department of Agriculture, USDA, alerted the food and agricultural community to give greater care in monitoring feedlots, stockyards, processing plants, import and storage areas.

An ongoing outbreak of avian influenza in the Netherlands is an example of the type of crisis we might face, and the coordination that may be needed, if a terrorist launched an attack on our agriculture. More than 9 million of the estimated 100 million chickens in the Netherlands were slaughtered to prevent the disease spreading since the outbreak began in late February. Some

800 farms in the eastern Netherlands were affected. Dutch exports of fowl and poultry products were stopped. The cost so far to farmers and the government is an estimated \$108 million.

The Dutch Government took a number of strong steps to contain the disease. The Dutch Army was called up to help. Some 100 troops joined more than 400 police and customs officers to enforce a quarantine around the epicenter of the outbreak and to keep the disease from spreading to nearby Germany and Belgium. A ban on movements of live chickens and eggs within the country was imposed in early April. This led to some inconvenience to consumers since the supply of eggs in grocery stores was limited.

A coordinated attack by terrorists on some of our leading chicken producing states, for example, Georgia, Arkansas, Alabama and North Carolina, with an impact equivalent to the natural outbreak in the Netherlands would have serious consequences.

Egg and chicken production in the United States is a \$20 billion plus a year industry. Another \$10 billion is spent on processing and getting the chicken and eggs to market. We export more than a billion dollars of chicken products a year. Some 30,000 farm families are involved in raising chickens. Three hundred thousand people work in processing and transporting chickens for market.

On any given day there are some 1.5 billion chickens sitting in chicken coops in the United States. Over a hundred million birds might have to be slaughtered. If there was a ban on shipment of chickens and eggs, not only would chicken producers suffer, so would related industries. The trucking industry, food processing industry, food retailers, and those involved in exporting chicken products abroad would all feel the impact. Billions of dollars in losses could result. The impact on farm families and employment could be substantial.

Of course, my concern about agroterrorism is not limited to the poultry industry. Agriculture and related industries, such as food processing, manufacturing, and transportation, account for approximately 13 percent of the U.S. gross domestic product and nearly 17 percent of domestic employment. The deliberate and coordinated spread of livestock or crop diseases could have a devastating effect on our nation.

USDA is the lead authority in responding to agricultural emergencies. It has taken several steps to improve our ability to counter a terrorist attack upon our nation's agriculture. USDA has created a homeland defense council and increased border inspection and research activities. USDA's overall activities, and actions in support of Operation Liberty, are commendable. But we need to do more to prepare ourselves.

Responding to an agroterrorist attack will require coordinated efforts by